



## **Bears Masculinities in Lisbon: Analysis of Public Profiles from Growlr**

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### **Abstract**

The research presents the results of a categorical content analysis of public profiles from Lisbon, Portugal, on the *Growlr* app, a location-based social networking platform used by self-identified Bears, mostly consisting of homo/bisexual men. Bears are a subgroup of the LGBTQ+ community, and there is a dispute regarding their conceptualisation. While some scholars emphasise certain physical features, others focus on attitudes or behaviours. However, the online profiles of self-identifying Bears reveal that each individual interprets and enacts their identity in a unique way. The study reveals a prevalence of femmephobic discourse in the profiles, which aims to enforce cisheteronormative masculinity. However, the research also identifies resistance to this norm, particularly among non-standard members of the Bear community. Online platforms like *Growlr* provide Bears with a space to connect and express their identities in their own ways, making them a rich resource for exploring how Bears navigate their gender and sexuality in the digital age. By analysing these profiles, we gain insights into the diversity and complexities within the Bear community and can identify patterns of discrimination and resistance that can inform broader efforts towards promoting equity and inclusion for all members of the LGBTQ+ community. The paper represents a section of ongoing research conducted by the first author under the Doctoral Program in Cultural Studies at the University of Aveiro, Portugal, under the adviser Professor Maria Manuel Baptista.

**Keywords:** LGBTQ+, Normativity, Portugal, Sexualities, Social Networks